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Scene From A Summer Evening

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SCENE FROM A SUMMER EVENING

by

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Dave lived three flights of fire escape up from an alley full of garbage cans and weeds that grew in cracks in the pavement. In the late afternoon his front room was filled with sunlight and dust motes and the fragrance of herb tea and guacamole dip; one window faced busy Third Street, the other a parking lot where a building used to be.

As afternoon mellowed to evening the setting sun turned the white walls to pale amber and shadows hid the cracks in the plaster. Tentacle wires snaked around the room, slithering from a stereo that crouched in the corner. The battered couch and upholstered chair became abstract, earth-toned forms in the failing light, full of secret treasures or dangers. Dave's possessions were savage beasts that devoured the space and the light.

The moist heat of the summer night slowed the air to a standstill. Odors of beer and cigarettes and the subtle, distinct scent of Dave himself mingled with the soft, lonely strains of Jackson Browne on the stereo, traffic horns on the street and cats singing in the alley.

In the still summer night the room lay in darkness except for the small pool of yellow light spilling from the narrow kitchen doorway. The light reached timidly into the room, gently nudging a half-filled teacup and one of Dave's shoes flung carelessly together on the floor like me and Dave on the couch. The room and our situation were much the same—a little cramped, a little unreal and never quite comfortable. But for a time, sufficient.